

**New Jersey Department of Education  
Special Education Receiving School Monitoring**

**Receiving School:** Morris-Union Jointure Commission    **County:** Union

**Monitoring Dates:** November 13-15, 2002

**Monitoring Team:** Sandra A. Gogerty, Paul Bilik, Elaine Lerner, Denise Wilkens

**Background Information**

During the 2001– 2002 school year, the Morris-Union Jointure Commission conducted a self-assessment of policies, procedures, programs, services, and student outcomes. This self-assessment component of the monitoring process provided the Morris-Union Jointure Commission with an opportunity to evaluate its strengths and areas of need with regard to:

- The provision of a free, appropriate public education (FAPE) for students with disabilities in the least restrictive environment;
- The development and implementation of policies and procedures resulting in procedural compliance; and
- The organization and delivery of programs and services to meet the needs of the students with disabilities.

The self-assessment was designed to identify areas of strength, promising practices, areas that need improvement and areas that may be noncompliant with state and federal requirements. The Morris-Union Jointure Commission developed an improvement plan to address identified areas of need.

The New Jersey Department of Education (NJDOE) conducted an on-site monitoring to verify the self-assessment findings, to assess the appropriateness of the improvement plan, and to determine the progress in implementing the plan.

During the monitoring process, the monitoring team reviewed Morris-Union Jointure Commission documents such as policies and procedures, student records from sending districts, lesson program books, services as indicated in IEPs, staff evaluations, student count information, master student lists, class lists, schedules of students/ teachers/related service personnel, and other relevant information. Interviews were conducted with the Morris-Union Jointure Commission's special education administrators, building principals, special education teachers and related service personnel.

**School Strengths**

The Morris-Union Jointure Commission is commended for the following unique programs for special education students:

**Community Links** is a community-based instruction program that has been developed for the secondary students to facilitate transition to adult life in the

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community. Goals and objectives from each student's IEP have been identified for community instruction and included in individualized instruction scenarios. Coordinated activities link occupational skills with community services and provide opportunities for the further development of vocational interests and community inclusion. For example, secondary students volunteer weekly at the community food banks working with a wide-range of community volunteers on a regular basis.

**Red Cross Club** is organized by the local chapter of the American Red Cross for area high school students. Morris-Union Jointure Commission students participate with non-disabled peers in the program. Generalization of workplace skills is promoted through the program. Projects include collecting and sorting food items for the needy, assembling gift packages for the Veteran's Hospital, and making and distributing Red Cross posters in town. Students also recycle aluminum cans in school and bring them to community drop-off sites to benefit the children's burn unit at the local hospital.

The Morris-Union Jointure Commission has a dedicated **transition coordinator**. The coordinator is responsible for transition issues for students transitioning from the middle school programs to the secondary programs, and secondary programs to adult life. The coordinator prepares parent transition packets, coordinates IEP meetings for students with transition issues, and schedules parent conferences on transition issues. One such conference in the past covered the following issues: wills, trusts, guardianship, and government benefits. The coordinator also is responsible for an extensive **career exploration program** which consists of job sampling opportunities for students ages sixteen and older.

**Greenhouse-** Through seeking innovative funding sources, the Morris-Union Jointure Commission obtained grants and donations to build a state of the art greenhouse at the New Providence facility. The secondary students will be able to use the greenhouse in a variety of methods including incorporating the use of the greenhouse into individual student programs as well as for positive behavioral support. The final stages of the greenhouse constructions project were being completed at the time of the on site visitation.

### **Areas Demonstrating Compliance With All Standards**

Of the eight areas reviewed, the following areas were determined to be areas of compliance by the Morris-Union Jointure Commission during self-assessment and by the Office of Special Education Programs during the on-site visit: **General Provisions, Staff Requirements, Facility Requirements and Programs and Services.**

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**Section II: Free, Appropriate Public Education (FAPE)**

**Summary of Findings:**

During self-assessment the Morris-Union Jointure Commission accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of length of day/year, physical education, services at no cost to parents, extended school year, observations of programs, and related services.

During the self-assessment process, the Morris-Union Jointure Commission identified a concern in the area of hearing aids. The school's improvement plan is insufficient to address the area of need because it lacks sufficient activity on a regular basis to ensure that hearing aids are functioning properly. The school will revise its improvement plan to include procedures and an administrative oversight component to ensure the consistent, compliant implementation of the procedures on a more regular basis.

An additional area of need was identified during the on-site visit regarding the provision of related services during the extended school year program.

**Area of Need:**

**Provision of Related Services** - During the on-site visit, through staff interviews, it was determined that related services are not provided to students at the start of the extended school year program unless the required contract from the sending district is received by the Morris-Union Jointure Commission.

- **The school will revise their improvement plan to include procedures to ensure that the related services are provided at the start of the extended school year program in accordance with Individualized Education Programs (IEPs). The plan must include an administrative oversight component to ensure the consistent, compliant implementation of the procedures.**

**Section V: Individualized Education Program/Annual Review**

**Summary of Findings:**

During self-assessment the Morris-Union Jointure Commission accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of IEP meeting conducted at least annually, IEP conducted with appropriate receiving school participants, signatures present on IEPs, current IEP, IEP accessibility, informing teachers/providers of IEP responsibilities, observation of proposed placement and statewide testing, implementation of IEP components, and progress reports.

During the self-assessment process, the Morris-Union Jointure Commission identified a concern in the area of delay between the date of parental consent and the implementation of IEP services. The school has developed an

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improvement plan that is sufficient to address this area of need. During the on-site visit, implementation of the improvement plan activities was verified.

Additional areas of need were identified during the on-site visit regarding student participation at IEP meetings and communication to sending district regarding missing IEP components.

**Areas of Need:**

**IEP Conducted with Appropriate Participants** - During the on-site visit through record reviews and interviews it was determined that an administrative decision was made not to have students attend IEP meetings because they would be disruptive.

- **The improvement plan must be revised to include procedures to ensure that an individual decision is being made for each student's participation at IEP meetings. The plan must also include an administrative oversight component to ensure the consistent, compliant implementation of the procedures.**

**Communication to Sending Districts Regarding Missing Components-** During the on-site visit, through record reviews it was determined that the school does not request clarification from sending districts when IEPs do not indicate if speech services are to be provided through an integrated or pull-out model.

- **The improvement plan must be revised to include procedures to ensure that the location of individual speech sessions is consistently specified in the IEP. The plan must include an administrative oversight component to ensure the consistent, compliant implementation of the procedures.**

**Section VI: Discipline**

**Summary of Finding:**

During self-assessment the Morris-Union Jointure Commission accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of standard disciplinary procedures, procedures for time out rooms, removal of student, changes to program/placement, suspensions, interim alternative educational setting, and termination of students.

During the self-assessment process, the Morris-Union Jointure Commission identified concerns in the areas of procedures for use of restraints and aversives. The Morris-Union Jointure Commission has developed an improvement plan that is sufficient to address this area of need. During the on-site visit implementation of the improvement plan activities was verified.

No additional areas of need were identified during the on-site visit.

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**Section VIII: Student Records**

**Summary of Findings:**

During self-assessment the Morris-Union Jointure Commission accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of return of records, access to records, access sheets, location of records, daily attendance, tardiness/absences, written notice of attendance, and student health records.

An additional area of need was identified during the on-site visit through record reviews and interviews regarding conformance with the pupil record code.

**Area of Need:**

**Conformance to Pupil Record Code** - During the on-site visit, staff interviews and a review of records indicated that the Morris-Union Jointure Commission does not include a notation on student central files as to the location of other pupil records.

- **The Morris-Union Jointure Commission will revise its improvement plan to include procedures to ensure that notations are maintained on the student central files that indicate where other pupil records are located. The plan must also include an administrative oversight component to ensure the consistent, compliant implementation of the procedures.**

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**Summary**

On-site special education monitoring was conducted in the Morris-Union Jointure Commission on November 13, 14, and 15, 2002. The purpose of the monitoring visit was to verify the Morris-Union Jointure Commission's report of findings resulting from their self-assessment and to review the Morris-Union Jointure Commission's improvement plan. The Morris-Union Jointure Commission is commended for the exceptionally comprehensive review conducted during the self-assessment process. As a result of that review the Morris-Union Jointure Commission was able to identify nearly all areas of need and develop an improvement plan that with some revision will bring about systemic change. The Morris-Union Jointure Commission is further commended for the many areas determined by the school and verified by the Department of Education as compliant with federal and state statutes and regulations.

Areas identified as consistently compliant by the Morris-Union Jointure Commission during self-assessment and verified during the on-site monitoring visit included the following: policies & procedures, staff development, annual reports, amendments, nonsectarian, certified/licensed staff, use of PTA/COTA, private school dual employment, employment/job descriptions of paraprofessionals, criminal history, professional development, programs provided in approved facilities, certificates of occupancy and inspections, fire drills, class size/age range, exceptions, description of special class programs, certifications, special classes, implementing IEP, CCCSs/CCCSSSD, home instruction, dispensing medication/nursing services, medical exams for sport teams, and preschool programs.

During the self-assessment process, the Morris-Union Jointure Commission identified areas of need regarding hearing aids, delay in implementation of IEP, and procedures for the implementation of restraints and aversives.

The on-site visit identified additional areas of need within the various standards regarding the provision of related services, IEP conducted with appropriate participants, communication to sending districts regarding missing components, and conformance to pupil record code.

Within forty-five days of receipt of the monitoring report, the Morris-Union Jointure Commission will revise and resubmit the improvement plan to the Office of Special Education Programs to address the areas of need identified during the on-site visit and those areas that require revisions to the improvement plan.